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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6025

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June 18, 2003

Dr. Leslie Lenkowsky
Chief Executive Officer
Corporation for National and Community Service
1201 New York Ave., NW
Washington DC, 20525

Dear Dr. Lenkowsky:

I am deeply disturbed about what is happening to AmeriCorps volunteers. I am shocked that you are blaming Congress. Congress is not to blame, you are.

The fact is that Congress provided funding for 50,000 volunteers, but you enrolled 70,000. The Corporation's mismanagement and lack of responsible accounting standards led to an overenrollment of 20,000 volunteers last year, resulting in fewer new volunteers this year. According to your own estimates, you will only be able to support 35,000 volunteers this year, not 50,000 as Congress intended. This was your fault, not Congress' fault. For the Corporation to blame Congress for cutting new enrollments is an outrageous lie. I am fed up with the Corporation's excuses, buck passing and finger pointing.

At the Corporation's hearing before my Subcommittee on April 10, you promised to reform the accounting and management practices at the Corporation by June 1. On May 30, you informed me that you would be unable to deliver on this promise.

Once again, the Senate Appropriations Committee is forced to clean up the Corporation's mess. Senator Bond and I will be introducing legislation today to fix the problem created by the Corporation's accounting mistakes so there can be 50,000 volunteers in 2003, which is what Congress intended. This legislation would not be necessary, were it not for the Enron-type accounting procedures employed by the Corporation under your watch.

Dr. Leslie Lenkowsky
June 18, 2003
Page 2

As a result of this mismanagement, thousands of volunteers who want to serve, and the communities who are counting on them, will be turned away from AmeriCorps. I am hearing this from constituents in my home state, from my colleagues in the Senate and from reports in the media. It is time for the Corporation to take responsibility for its mistakes and mismanagement. The only way to begin restoring the credibility of the Corporation is for you to resign as Chief Executive Officer effective immediately.

As one of the founders and chief sponsors of the Corporation, I am deeply disturbed and disappointed by the way the Corporation has been run. Instead of expanding volunteerism, we are mired in a mess of bureaucratic mismanagement. Every year, as Chairman or Ranking Member of the VA/HUD Subcommittee, I worked with Senator Bond to save AmeriCorps from elimination by the House of Representatives and fought to increase funding for the Corporation to expand its reach to communities across this country.

For the good of the Corporation, I urge you to resign so a new Chief Executive Officer and a new management team can be put into place as soon as possible.

Signed,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Barbara A. Mikulski". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Barbara A. Mikulski
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on VA/HUD and
Independent Agencies